

VZCZCXRO4457
RR RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM
DE RUEHBD #0206/01 1980905
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 170905Z JUL 07
FM AMEMBASSY BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3880
INFO RUEHXS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0022
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0421
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0099
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 0499
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN 000206

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/17/2017
TAGS: [EAID BX](#) [EAID ID MY](#) [SENV](#)
SUBJECT: HEART OF BORNEO: BRUNEI WILL OFFER TO HOST
SECRETARIAT

SIPDIS

REF: BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN 185 (NOTAL)

Classified By: AMBASSADOR EMIL SKODON FOR REASONS 1.5 (B AND D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: The Government of Brunei (GOB) intends to push for a quick decision on establishment of a professional secretariat to help implement the Heart of Borneo (HOB)

SIPDIS

tropical forest conservation initiative when it meets with Malaysia and Indonesia at the forthcoming HOB trilateral in Bandar Seri Begawan. The GOB will suggest to its HOB partners that the secretariat be located in Brunei, and will offer to pick up the majority of its operating costs if they agree to that proposal. Ambassador urged maximum transparency in the HOB implementation process for donor countries and other stakeholders. END SUMMARY.

12. (SBU) GOB Deputy Minister of Industry and Primary Resources, Dato Hamdillah, briefed Ambassador on GOB preparations for the first trilateral working meeting on HOB implementation, to be held July 19-20 in Bandar Seri Begawan. The agenda will include discussion of an HOB strategic action plan, establishment of an HOB secretariat, and identification of general themes for trilateral cooperation. Of these agenda items, the GOB's main focus will be on gaining approval for the early establishment of a professional secretariat to be located in Bandar Seri Begawan.

13. (C) Hamdillah outlined a multifaceted GOB strategy for gaining the agreement of the Malaysian and Indonesian governments to locate the HOB secretariat in Brunei. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade has been enlisted to make the diplomatic case by arguing that Bandar Seri Begawan is the only one of the national capitals of the three HOB partner nations to be located on the island of Borneo, and also the only one that does not currently host a major regional organization. That diplomatic argument will be backed up by more practical measures. Hamdillah said the Sultan of Brunei has authorized him to commit the GOB to contributing DOLS 200,000 annually to the secretariat's operating costs or 60 percent of its operating budget, whichever is higher, provided it is located in Brunei. The GOB would also offer to house the secretariat in temporary quarters for up to three years until a purpose-built building (presumably also funded primarily by the GOB) could be constructed.

14. (C) The GOB also intends to put forward a recommendation on how the HOB should be structured. It will suggest a

Governing Board made up of members nominated by the three HOB partner countries, with ongoing oversight of the proposed Brunei-based secretariat to be carried out by the GOB Ministry of Industry and Primary Resources on behalf of the board. The Bruneian proposal will call for appointment of a Chief Executive Officer and two Deputy CEO's to manage the secretariat, with one position to be filled by each of the

SIPDIS

HOB partners. Hamdillah said he was still debating with his Minister as to whether the GOB should push to have a Bruneian named as CEO. His Minister wanted that to be the case, but Hamdillah did not. Not only did he think it would be too hard a sell with the Malaysians and Indonesians, he was not confident that he could find a Bruneian citizen with the technical and managerial skills required to lead the secretariat effectively and implement the HOB vision rapidly.

SIPDIS

15. (C) Hamdillah readily admitted that chairing the forthcoming trilateral will be a challenge, since the HOB partners had yet to agree on detailed procedures or protocols for implementing the HOB since their leaders endorsed its creation earlier this year. He hoped to reach informal understandings on such issues by hosting Malaysian and Indonesian attendees at an off-site session prior to the commencement of the formal trilateral meeting, to be held, appropriately enough, in Brunei's Ulu Temburong National Park. One of the questions that would be addressed was the extent to which the trilateral meeting and future HOB deliberations would be conducted in closed session among the HOB partners. Ambassador urged Hamdillah to push for maximum transparency and openness in HOB decision making, particularly for international donors such as the USG, Japan, and European countries, but also for other stakeholders. Hamdillah agreed to do so.

16. (C) COMMENT: It is encouraging to hear that the GOB will push for rapid implementation of the HOB conservation vision, but given the usual deliberate pace of decision-making in southeast Asian regional organizations, we are less than

BANDAR SER 00000206 002 OF 002

confident that agreements on the secretariat and other implementing measures will be reached at this first trilateral working meeting. Nevertheless, the GOB plan to put forward detailed proposals and offer its largesse for implementing them are welcome, and reflect the surprising extent to which the leadership and populace of the Sultanate have rapidly embraced the HOB initiative. END COMMENT.
SKODON